

Ninth International Congress of Ethnobiology

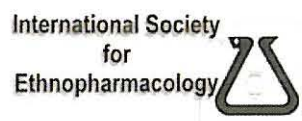
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Programme and Abstracts

Ethnobiology, Social Change and Displacement

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**FLORA DIVERSITY OF HOMEGARDENS IN THE NORTHEAST OF PORTUGAL: A
COMPLEMENT FOR HUMAN NEEDS, A FARMER'S INCOME, A CONSERVATION STRATEGY**

An ethnobotanical survey that has been carried out in Bragança, the northeastern region of Portugal, reveals the great importance of homegardens in the household farmers' systems. Surrounding houses or occupying villages' communal fields, homegardens are agroecosystems where cultivated and wild plants, local varieties, traditional and recently introduced crops and species are set, side by side. This mixed flora (such as root and cereal crops, legumes and vegetable crops, fruit trees, both annual and perennial herbs, forest shrubs and trees) provides food, spices, medicine, wood, animal feed, farm tools, household utensils, handicraft, ornament and scent, as well as for the satisfaction of other aspects of day life such as religion, rituals and ceremonial uses. The surplus from the homegardens is a source of cash income, as surplus product is usually traded with neighbours or sold in local markets. It seems that the high diversity of those agroecosystems is related directly to traditional livestock activities. Such dependence can constrain homegardens' management as their maintenance deals with the survival of rural areas and conservation policies.

Thursday Panel 9

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WILD PLANTS USED AS FOOD AND MEDICINE IN THE NORTHEAST OF PORTUGAL

For the first time an ethnobotanical survey has been carried out in the Natural Park of Montesinho in northeastern Portugal. Working with 49 informants (mostly women) from 20 villages we found 133 wild plants, belonging to 45 botanical families that were traditionally employed as food and/or medicine. For example, *Montia fontana*, *Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum* and *Portulaca oleracea* were collected and eaten in salads, *Bryonia dioica* sprouts boiled and mixed with eggs, *Borago officinalis* leaves were substantial vegetables for soup, *Prunus spinosa* fruits were suitable for an alcoholic beverage. Other remarkable species used in traditional medicine are: *Pterospartum tridentatum*, an anticatarrhal; *Cytisus multiflorus*, an antirheumatic; *Xolantha tuberaria*, an anti-inflammatory and diuretic; *Umbilicus rupestris* for haemorrhoids; *Crataegus monogyna* to prevent pneumonia; *Salvia sclarea* and *Prunella vulgaris* as vulnerary plants. Some of those species were also involved in other activities such as veterinary, technological purposes, handicraft, gardening and social or symbolical uses. Medicinal wild plants are still very often used and collected, but the demand for wild vegetables is low, because there are plenty of edible alternatives, and wild food plants are generally associated with times of starvation. As all the traditional knowledge belongs to older people, this cultural heritage is seriously threatened. Wednesday Panel 20

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PRAIRIE TURNIP PARADOX: CAN TRADITIONAL HARVEST HELP SUSTAIN POPULATIONS?

First hand accounts suggest that prairie turnips (*Pedimelum esculentum*, a North American legume) are more abundant in areas where they are harvested than where they are not. Because the roots of this long-lived perennial are eaten and plants do not re-sprout following harvest, a greater abundance in areas where plants are harvested is impossible following a simple demographic model. For this study, harvesters, retailers and users were interviewed in order to determine if a compensatory mechanism might have been overlooked. Harvesters from three North American tribes, Crow, Oglala and Lakota, emphasized that plant tops were left in the field when roots were harvested in order to rejuvenate the population. Historical accounts also suggest that across the Great Plains prairie turnips were harvested when seeds were ripening. As a result of the ethnographic exploration, new attention was given to the role of disturbance in seedling recruitment and survival and a more complex life-cycle model proposed. Wednesday Session 37